DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 282 347 EA 019 451

AUTHOR Nelson, Erik
TITLE Dropout Prevention. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management: ERIC Digest, Number Fourteen.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 85
CONTRACT 400-83-0013
NOTE 4p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 (free).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Rate; *Dropout Research; *Dropouts; High Schools; Program Descriptions; Rehabilitation; *School Holding Power; *Student Attrition; *Withdrawal (Education)
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; Experimental Program for Orientation CO

ABSTRACT

High school dropouts are usually academic underachievers who adjust to social environments with difficulty. When they leave school, they develop even greater behavior problems and have more trouble getting employment than do high school graduates. To prevent dropouts, schools try to find funds for dropout prevention programs, work with agencies and organizations to guide teachers and students, and prepare dropout research. The Experimental Program for Orientation (EXPO) of Colorado achieved success by recognizing and working with eighth-grade students who were potential dropouts. This accomplishment is evidenced by increased grade point averages and only one dropout. (RG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED282347

DROPOUT PREVENTION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EA 019 451

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DROPOUT PREVENTION

High dropout rates among high school students remain a blight on school systems across the country. School officials recognize the burden placed on society by large numbers of students who lack necessary educational and social skills. Educators, however, are using a variety of methods to encourage students to stay in school.

How many students drop out?

The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that about 14 percent of students who were sophomores in 1980 dropped out of school by 1982. This percentage represents over one-half million students.

A breakdown of subgroups indicates that males are more likely to drop out than females (15 vs. 13 percent). Hispanics and blacks (18 and 17 percent, respectively) had higher dropout rates than whites.

The Center for Human Resource Research, in a longitudinal study conducted from 1979 through 1982, points out that some dropouts reenroll and get a diploma, while others graduate by virtue of passing a GED examination. Of 25.5 million students who had graduated by 1982, 6.3 percent held a GED rather than a diploma.

What are the characteristics of the typical dropout?

School dropouts tend to fall into the general pattern of academic underachievement and social and emotional problems. Dropouts generally perform below grade level and have problems making social adjustments. Many dropouts are also eligible for special education programs or services.

Characteristics of typical dropouts include:

1. a belief that high school is a different, more difficult experience than grade school
2. a history of transferring schools or changing school systems
3. a feeling of not sharing a sense of "belonging" to the high school as a whole
4. a tendency to avoid talking with school personnel about dropping out because they doubt it will help or because they do not know whom to contact
5. a feeling of losing interest in school and a belief that school personnel have lost interest in them
6. a belief they possess too many problems to successfully complete their education
7. family problems such as divorce, death, separation, abuse, or other problems
8. situations in which other family members drop out of school

What are the financial and social costs of dropouts?

After dropping out, adolescents show even higher rates of problem behaviors, isolation from their families, and unemployment. Statistics reinforce the argument that high school dropouts have more trouble getting jobs than do graduates. Labor Department figures show that unemployment rates for high school dropouts jumped from 19 percent at the end of 1970 to 25.3 percent at the end of 1980, while unemployment for high school graduates rose only from 11.5 percent to 13.9 percent.

Adolescents who quit before finishing high school are less able to provide for themselves and much more likely to become burdens on society. As one principal put it, "Instead of talking tax dollars for dropout programs, let's talk welfare, let's talk Aid to Dependent Children, let's talk about all the money society will have to pay for these kids if they can do nothing when they leave high school."

How can schools help potential dropouts?

Schools dedicated to dropout prevention tend to cite four main goals as central to any formula for prevention: seek funding for dropout prevention programs, develop links with community agencies that can help schools in guiding teachers and students to appropriate services, identify and work with organizations than can help students improve their academic environment, and prepare research and information on how schools, homes, and the community can combat the dropout problem.

Additional methods for preventing dropouts include:

1. emphasize support programs operating in schools
2. encourage cocurricular activities for as many students as possible
3. increase the information supplied to students about dealing with the school system
4. increase structured group meetings for high-risk students within the school setting
5. increase alternative classes, work programs, and correspondence classes
6. allow students who could realistically function better elsewhere to transfer to a different school
7. encourage families of troubled students to seek family support and couseling from professional agencies
8. recognize potential dropouts as special education candidates
9. maintain a night school program
10. make homebound tutoring available to as many high-risk students as possible

What features characterize successful programs?

EXPO, the Experimental Program for Orientation at Gateway High School in Aurora, Colorado, is representative of effective programs that identify potential dropouts early and help keep them in school. Initially, the program tried to help high school juniors and seniors who were about to leave school. But most of these students dropped out regardless of teacher support. The teachers participating in EXPO began to investigate what went wrong.

The teachers soon discovered the problem was too little too late. They adopted a different strategy: identify early those eighth grade students who were potential dropouts. The organizers of EXPO stressed two key procedural rules: (1) students would be invited to volunteer for the program (no one was to be coerced into participating), and (2) students enrolled in special education programs were excluded (because they were already receiving special attention). The invitations to students stressed that EXPO was designed to assist students in the orientation to high school life.

The results of EXPO after only one year were impressive. EXPO students earned grade point averages nearly a full point higher than potential dropouts not enrolled in EXPO. EXPO students were truant an average of 17 class hours compared with the 96.5 class hours for students not enrolled in EXPO. Only one EXPO student dropped out of school.

RESOURCES

Batsche, Catherine. "Indicators of Effective Programming: Examining the School Work Transition for Dropouts." *Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education* 7 (Spring 1985): 27-30. EJ 316 269.

Beck, Lisa; Muia, Joseph A. "A Portrait of a Tragedy: Research Findings on the Dropout." *High School Journal* 64 (November 1980): 68-72. EJ 245 190.

Mahan, Guy; Johnson, Charles. "Dealing with Academic, Social, and Emotional Problems." *NASSP Bulletin* 67 (April 1983): 80-83. EJ 279 493.

Mahood, Wayne. "Born Losers: School Dropouts and Pushouts." *NASSP Bulletin* 65 (january 1981): 54-57. EJ 238 673.

Maurer, Richard D. "Dropout Prevention: An Intervention Model for Today's High Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan* 63 (March 1982): 70-71. EJ 259 467.

Ross, Victor J. "Find Potential Dropouts Early, Then Help Them Stay in School." *Executive Educator* 5 (June 1983): 16-17. EJ 280 904.

Uhrmacher, P. Bruce. "Use the Step-by-Step Approach to Reduce the Student Dropout Rate." *American School Board Journal* 172 (April 1985): 40-41. EJ 316 695.

ERIC DIGEST, Number Fourteen
Prepared by Erik Nelson, Research Analyst
A product of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
College of Education, University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403
1985

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. 400-83-0013. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.